

Eastern CT Veterans Community Center



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Date: March 5, 2022
To: Committee on Veterans' Affairs
From: Eastern CT Veterans Community Center, Windham Region Veterans Coffeehouse
Re: SB 337

To Whom It May Concern:

The Eastern CT Veterans Community Center was opened in June of 2022 because of the need for improving the information and services provided to veterans in rural Eastern CT. In the last seven months we have grown in size to represent almost 800 veterans serving our country from WWII to Afghanistan and today. During our weekly coffeehouse meetings we discuss proposed bills, unmet needs of veterans and considerations to improve their health and well-being. It is with this support of so many voices that we submit our support for SB 337, An Act Concerning Federal Veterans' Benefits and Income Eligibility Determinations For Certain Public Assistance Programs.

Over the last year we have assisted many veterans and/or their surviving spouses with applying for Aid and Attendance financial assistance and Housebound assistance. These veterans are in desperate need of help to perform their activities of daily living that include bathing, eating, dressing, toileting, adjusting their prosthetic devices or protection from environmental hazards. Their disabilities have caused them to be bedridden in many cases, and some are in nursing homes. To include this financial federal VA benefit that they receive as a result of their service to our country in the calculation of their eligibility for state public assistance programs is a travesty. These veterans receive their A&A as a *benefit* of their service-- it is not a *payment* for their service.

We respectfully request that Aid and Attendance payments NOT be considered income assets in determining state public assistance eligibility. We also request that Housebound assistance NOT be considered income in these determinations. It is important that we honor the promises we made to our soldiers in caring for them and their families. So many of our disabled and housebound veterans require so much assistance BECAUSE OF their service-related injuries and disabilities. In particular, Vietnam Era veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange are a growing number of veterans receiving this financial benefit.

The Eastern CT Veterans Community Center and the Windham Region Veterans Coffeehouse, with 800 veteran voices, support SB 337 An Act Concerning Federal Veterans' Benefits and Income Eligibility Determinations For Certain Public Assistance Programs. It is our hope that the Committee on Veterans Affairs sees the importance of this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diane Nadeau
President/CEO, Windham Region Chamber of Commerce
Executive Director, Eastern CT Veterans Community Center &
Windham Region Veterans Coffeehouse